

**Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens
Powder River Basin Resource Council
Western Organization of Resource Councils**

The Honorable Andy Harris
Chairman, Energy and Environment Subcommittee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Brad Miller
Ranking Member, Energy and Environment Subcommittee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

January 31, 2012

Dear Chairman Harris and Ranking Member Miller,

On behalf of Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens (PACC), the Powder River Basin Resource Council (PRBRC), the Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC) and our thousands of members who live in Pavillion, Wyoming and the oil and gas fields of the West, I am writing regarding the Subcommittee's February 1 hearing on EPA Hydraulic Fracturing Research. Many of our members are family farmers, ranchers and people who live and work in areas directly affected by oil and gas development. Many are also split estate landowners who are severely impacted, but have only limited control over the drilling, hydraulic fracturing and production taking place on their land and on neighboring lands. I hope that you will give full time to our perspective and concerns, and ask that you include this letter in the record of the February 1 hearing.

PACC, PRBRC, WORC and our members strongly support EPA's Pavillion investigation in the Pavillion area. The health of Pavillion area residents is being severely impacted by toxic constituents and explosive levels of methane in drinking water, stock water and groundwater aquifers. When we turn on the tap, the water reeks of hydrocarbons and chemicals. Our drinking water now comes from five-gallon jugs. We wonder how we're going to support our families and pay our bills if the contamination affects our livestock and farming operations. Selling out is no longer an option because property values in the Pavillion area have declined to nothing. Homes and farms can't even be used as collateral. It is clear that if EPA had not stepped in, impacted residents would be no closer to having our concerns addressed than we were over the previous ten years.

The area under investigation, just east of Pavillion, is home to about 160 residents in the middle of the Wind River Indian Reservation, 150 miles southeast of Grand Teton National Park. We share our farming operations with over 200 oil and gas wells that surround our homes and the fields we work in. For over a decade area residents requested help from Wyoming state officials, EnCana and its predecessor, Tom Brown, Inc to address well water contamination and health problems we fear are from the gas wells in our community. To help you understand the level of public concern, in 2007, 99 local residents signed a petition asking “EnCana to put a hold on all production.” and saying, “We don’t believe that they are acting responsible in their drilling operations in the Pavillion area.”

Although Tom Brown and EnCana sampled water wells and provided replacement water for some residents, other residents’ concerns were mostly dismissed. Although the Wyoming Oil and Gas Conservation Commission (WOGCC) and the Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality (WDEQ) did not conduct their own testing, they reported to residents that our water had naturally poor quality and showed levels of bacteria and elements not associated with oil and gas development. Industry and state agencies have consistently denied any connection between oil and gas development and water quality issues or impacts to human health. It was even suggested that residents may have contaminated our own wells.

After more than ten years of failing to acknowledge and address the problems, EnCana, the oil and gas industry and the state of Wyoming are now making demands that could obstruct EPA’s investigation results. We urge you to support EPA’s draft report on the Pavillion area groundwater investigation and fully support funding for continued EPA investigation in the Pavillion area.

As you examine EPA’s hydraulic fracturing research, we hope that you will also carefully consider the impacts to people living in the Pavillion area and in other communities impacted by oil and gas development across the country.

- The state of Wyoming has failed to appropriately investigate drinking water contamination reports for more than ten years.
- The state of Wyoming has failed to follow or investigate the public health issues raised in Pavillion.
- The state of Wyoming has failed to appropriately understand the geology and protect water resources.
- State regulators, local residents, public health researchers and the public at large have very limited access to the largest body of water quality samples – those conducted by oil and gas operators.

We find it outrageous and extremely dangerous that landowners and residents do not have access to water quality data from their own household and agricultural wells.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact our staff, Deb Thomas at 307-645-3236 or dthomas@powderriverbasin.org if you have questions or require additional information or documentation.

Sincerely,

John Fenton
Chair, Pavillion Area Concerned Citizens
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Pavillion, WY 82523